

April 25, 2007

**Statement of Congressman Pete Stark
On Funding the War in Iraq**

Madam Speaker, I must again make the difficult decision to vote 'present' on the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act.

I support the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Iraq.

I can't in good conscience vote to fund President Bush's War in Iraq. This senseless conflict has already taken the lives of more than 3300 Americans and tens of thousands of Iraqis. It has undermined the United States' prestige in the world, led to the outbreak of a Shiite-Sunni civil war, and cost us \$379 billion. Those funds – and the tens of billions of dollars for the war in today's legislation – would be better spent on education, healthcare and other unmet domestic priorities.

Nor can I can vote, however, against a Democratic majority intent on taking America's Iraq policy in a new direction. I applaud Speaker Pelosi and the Democratic leadership for working toward the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. My Republican colleagues voting against today's legislation are doing a disservice to both our troops and our security by supporting an open-ended commitment in Iraq. I cannot join their opposition to holding President Bush accountable.

My 'present' vote is therefore an expression of strong opposition to the war's continuation for even one more day and strong support for the Democratic Congress' attempt to get an arrogant and stubborn President to change course in Iraq.

I urge the President to reconsider both his threat to veto this bill and his insistence on keeping our troops in harms way. It is long past time for Bush to end a war he should never have begun.

